

CULTURAL ECONOMY: A NEW GLOBAL FORCE BASED ON CREATIVE CAPITAL.

Marifer Aguirre, Stan Kuiperi, Pam Breaux, (Sec. Dep. of Cult)



Recently the first World Cultural Economy Forum (WCEF) took place in New Orleans, USA. This congress was a global dialogue about the power of culture and how to turn creative ideas first into policy, and then into a revenue-generating economic force.

More than 70 international delegations of cultural ambassadors convened in the Morial Convention Centre of New Orleans to take part in a two-day program presenting the latest, most interesting and most innovating projects, best practices and studies in the field of cultural and creative economies from around the world.

Aruba had "front row seating" by means of invitations to the Aruba Intl. Arts Foundation's co-founder Mr. Stan Kuiperi and the young Aruban teenager Miss Marifer Aguirre of 15 years. Based on previous cooperation in international projects, Mr. Ashfaq Ishaq of the Intl. Child Art Foundation, co-organizer at the WCEF, invited Aruba in order to participate in an International Youth Panel "The Future of Culture" and a "Roundtable on Creativity". This was supported locally by the UNOCA Foundation.

The WCEF being the first large-scale post-Katrina congress held in New Orleans, the Lt. Governor Mr. Mitchell Landrieu thanked the international community for its help to New Orleans in a brilliant welcoming speech. From then on, an exciting roster of international panels presented and discussed many views on cultural economy and their experiences in its implementation as part of their countries' total economy.

The term "Cultural economy" is relatively new, its current usage dating from the 1990's. Although there is no one single definition for "cultural economy" as yet, the concept is widely used to indicate a type of economy that is based on cultural creation, production, consumption and export. In short, on cultural industries. Cultural industries are those industries that produce cultural goods and services, such as: *Traditional cultural expressions* (festival, celebrations, etc.), *cultural sites* (archaeological sites,

museums, etc.), *the visual and performing arts, publishing and printed media, audiovisuals* (film, television, etc.), *design* (graphic, interior, fashion, toys, etc.), *new media* (software, video games, digitalized creative content, etc.), *creative services* (advertising, creative Research & Design, architectural, cultural and recreational services)

The United Nations 2008 *Cultural Economy Report* states that both developed and developing countries are rapidly gearing up their cultural economy machinery. Having discovered that the interaction of creativity, artistic and cultural production, industry and commerce provides for a powerful economic punch, both the public and private sectors are teaming up to ride this new economic wave and to develop respectable revenue for their countries and businesses. Recent statistics are staggering, and show why the cultural economy is becoming the most dynamic aspect of the world economy. China, number one in world cultural export, earned over US\$ 60 billion in 2005. Italy in second place, US\$28 billion, followed by the USA and Germany at US\$ 24 billion. The cultural economy is growing at a yearly rate of 8.8 %, and is already contributing more than 7% to the world's GDP. The creative industry also contributes more to Europe's GDP than the real estate, F&B, chemicals, plastics and textile industries. 2003 statistics show that in the European Community, the cultural economy provided for more than 650 billion Euro's in revenues, more than the automobile and ICT industries. World cultural goods exports have been estimated at US\$ 425 billion in the same year, according to the UNCTAD. Developing countries have raised their share in cultural exports to no less than 40% in 2005. This goes to show that culture is no longer a marginal economic aspect, but is moving center stage big time. Companies like Blue Man Group and Cirque du Soleil, and celebrations like the Brazilian carnival have become multi-million dollar events that attract huge crowds and generate even bigger public and private income.

Economic diversification has been long overdue in Aruba, everyone agrees. The development of a cultural economy, therefore, seems to be a practical and possible alternative. The first step would be to throw overboard our post-colonial educational complex that we cannot do anything. Start thinking we can, and we will!

In the WCEF congress Creativity Panel, Stan Kuiperi emphasized that "*creativity can be taught, trained and developed in a good educational system*". In her youth panel speech, Marifer Aguirre focused on our strengths: "*Because of Aruba's culture and education I have the capacity to speak 4 different languages! English, Spanish, Dutch and Papiamentu. I want to be heard all around the world and make a change.*"

Locally, we need first to focus on our only true resource which is our human capital, our creative and intellectual capital. Every mind counts, and one of the cultural economy's greatest strengths is social inclusion and human development. Then we need to integrate existing local projects and public and private organizations (ATA, Economic Affairs, Dept. of Culture, NGO's) into one force to critically analyze our situation, upgrade our cultural sectors and creative output, and forge these with economic systems as part of a national policy to capitalize on our promising cultural potential. There is no real limit to our possibilities. The power of our creative capital will ultimately decide our destiny. We have already realized one visionary's past dream of a flourishing tourism for Aruba. We can dream again and make a flourishing Aruban cultural economy come true as well. ■

**Stan Kuiperi is an Aruban Arts Education teacher, visual artist and arts project developer. He has lived and studied in Aruba, Pto. Rico, the USA, the Netherlands and France, and holds a Dutch Master in Art Education degree. An established visual artist, he has exhibited his paintings in more than 50 international and local shows, including four international Art Biennials. He recently lectured about Dutch Caribbean art in New York City, and is co-founder and project developer for the Aruba International Arts Foundation, one of Aruba's leading organizers of international art projects in the educational field. (www.stankuiperi.com)*



Creativity Round table